

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01     SECTO 12125 141249Z  
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W  
-----038601 141255Z /43  
O 141150Z DEC 77 ZFF-4  
FM USDEL SECRETARY IN RIYADH  
TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE  
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTO 12125

EXDIS HANDLE AS NODIS

CHEROKEE

FOR AMBASSADOR FROM THE SECRETARY

WHITE HOUSE FOR BRZEZINSKI

CAIRO FOR ATHERTON

E. O. 11652: XGDS-2  
TAGS: OVIP(VANCE, CYRUS)  
SUBJ: REPORT ON SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT  
ASSAD DECEMBER 13, 1977

1. I PROMISED HUSSEIN A BRIEFING ON MY TALKS IN DAMASCUS.  
PLEASE DRAW ON FOLLOWING AS YOU THINK APPROPRIATE.

2. I MET THIS AFTERNOON FOR TWO HOURS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER  
KHADDAM, FOLLOWED BY ANOTHER TWO HOURS WITH PRESIDENT  
ASSAD. ALTHOUGH THE SYRIANS DISAGREE PROFOUNDLY WITH  
SADAT'S POLICY AND OUR SUPPORT OF IT, THE TONE OF THE  
MEETINGS, ESPECIALLY WITH ASSAD, WAS QUITE POSITIVE.

3. I BEGAN BY RESTATING OUR COMMITMENT TO A COMPREHENSIVE  
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PEACE AND THE RECONVENING OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. I  
EXPLAINED TH AT WE SUPPORT THE CAIRO MEETINGS AS PART OF A  
PROCESS THAT WE HOPED WOULD ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF PEACE.

4. I THEN REVIEWED THE RESULTS OF MY TRIP TO DATE,  
EMPHASIZING SADAT'S COMMITMENT TO AN OVERALL PEACE AND  
HIS INSISTANCE THAT ISRAEL SHOULD MAKE A PUBLIC

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE ON WITHDRAWAL FROM THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND ON READINESS TO RESOLVE THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION. ASSAD SHOWED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN THE ATMOSPHERE IN ISRAEL, ASKING MANY QUESTIONS ABOUT INDICATIONS OF CHANGES IN THINKING. I TOLD HIM THAT THERE HAS BEEN A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN ISRAELI ATTITUDES AND THAT THE ISRAELI LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC SEEMED TO BE AWARE OF THE NEED TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE KEY ISSUES AND TO TAKE A STEP WHICH WOULD BE A SERIOUS RESPONSE TO SADAT'S DECISION.

5. IN THE COURSE OF LENGTHY DISCUSSIONS OF THEIR OWN VIEWS, ASSAD AND KHADDAM WERE BOTH CRITICAL OF THE SADAT TRIP TO ISRAEL BECAUSE IN THEIR OWN OPINION, IT HAD DISRUPTED THE "EQUILIBRIUM OF FORCES" IN THE AREA, HAD WEAKENED THE ARAB POSITION, AND HAD THUS MADE GENEVA IMPOSSIBLE UNTIL A "NEW EQUILIBRIUM" WAS FOUND. AS ASSAD DESCRIBED THE SITUATION, IN THE PAST THE ARABS HAD BEEN UNITED AGAINST ISRAEL. NOW ONE OF THE KEY ARAB COUNTRIES HAS "JOINED THE OTHER SIDE."

6. ASSAD WAS CAREFUL NOT TO ATTACK SADAT PERSONALLY, ALTHOUGH HE WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF HIS ACTIONS. BOTH HE AND KHADDAM STRESSED THAT SYRIA IS STILL COMMITTED TO THE GOAL OF PEACE, BUT THE SITUATION HAD CHANGED AND THE CAIRO MEETING WILL SERVE NO PUPOSE. ASSAD IS WORRIED BY THE PROSPECT OF A BILATERAL EGYPTIAN-  
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ISRAELI AGREEMENT. HE DOUBTS THAT BEGIN WILL REALLY TAKE THE HARD DECISIONS THAT SADAT IS DEMANDING OF HIM. THIS SKEPTICISM GOES FAR TO EXPLAIN HIS DISTRESS OVER SADAT'S INITIATIVE. HE BELIEVES SADAT HAS GIVEN A GREAT DEAL WITH LITTLE LIKELIHOOD OF GETTING MUCH IN RETURN. HE SEEMS TO IMPLY THAT IF THE ISRAELIES WERE TO CHANGE THEIR POSITIONS ON TERRITORY, THE PALESTINIANS, AND JERUSALEM, THEN THE PEACE PROCESS MIGHT OPEN UP AGAIN. BUT HE IS SKEPTICAL THAT THIS WILL HAPPEN, AND THUS PREFERS TO SIT ON THE SIDELINES UNTIL THE PICTURE CLEARS.

7. ASSAD WAS ANXIOUS TO CONVEY THE POINT THAT OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS REMAIN STRONG AND THAT WE SHOULD REMAIN IN TOUCH. I TOLD HIM IN PRIVATE OF THE UPCOMING BEGIN TRIP.  
VANCE

SECRET

NNN

## Message Attributes

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**Concepts:** SECTO, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, MEETING REPORTS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, PEACE PLANS, CAT-C, CHEROKEE 12-14-77  
**Control Number:** n/a  
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**Executive Order:** X2  
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